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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

50X1-HUM

COUNTRY

Czechoslovakia

SUBJECT

Leopoldov Prison

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1. Leopoldov Pevnost (Fortress) was built in 1669 during the reign of King Leopold as a fortress and bastion against the Turks who conducted raids as far as Slovakia. Later the fortress was used as a military arsenal and still later it was converted into a prison. After 1948 the Leopoldov fortress was used as a prison only for criminals with heavy sentences for major crimes.
2. In order to eliminate the harsh sound of the 'prison', the Communist regime in 1950 renamed it 'The Penal Institute for Men at Leopoldov'. The inmates of this so-called Penal Institute are mainly political prisoners whose only crime is that they remained loyal to democratic principles and refused to humble themselves to the Communist dictatorship.
3. The number of prisoners in Leopoldov is constant and comprises between 800 to 1200 men. They are housed in sections and old rooms which at one time served as guard rooms for men-at-arms. Some 25 to 30 men are confined to each room, though at various times prisoners are placed in solitary confinement.
4. The prison contains some infamous dungeons which were hollowed out of the castle walls. Into these holes, prisoners who resist prison discipline or have attempted escape are cast. They are subject to torture in these dungeons and anyone who is finally released is returned in a state of ruined health.
5. The institution contains the following work shops in which prisoners are compelled to work eight hours daily in accordance with Communist norms:
 - (a) Basket Shop, where reed furniture and various ornamental things are made.

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- (b) Furniture Factory, (formerly Svit) which at one time was privately owned. It is now a national enterprise. The prisoners who work there are cabinet makers, varnishers, or are skilled in other woodworking trades. This shop manufactures the finest of furniture and various office equipment.
- (c) Rug Plant where various kinds of rugs, quilts, and covers are woven.

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- (d) Art Workshop where only the prisoners with artistic talent are employed.
- (e) Plant Workshop where prison furniture only is repaired and where tables, benches and so on for the use of the prisoners are made.
- (f) Metal Working Shop for the repair of prison equipment, pewter plates, kettles, etc.
- (g) Tailor Shop, where the prisoners' clothes are repaired, new ones made, and uniforms stitched.
- (h) Bakery where bread for the entire prison is made as well as for the Guards' Canteen.
- (i) Laundry where the prisoners' underclothes are washed. They receive a change of underclothes once a month.
- (j) Jute mill which is located in a building next to the old school. Prisoners with only the heaviest sentences work here, manufacturing sacking and coverings for barrels. They also shell beans and peas for the kitchen.
- (k) Administration where prisoners work in the office and various other departments doing clerical work.
- (l) Institute Writing Room where prisoners copy judicial papers, etc, received from the district courts.

Other prisoners work as gardeners in the prison gardens caring for the vegetable plots, as laborers on the roads outside of the prison gates, as stonemasons repairing and remodeling the prison buildings, and as corridor-men /janitors/ sweeping the cell blocks, corridors, courtyard etc.

- 6. All prisoners are compelled to work except those certified by a physician as sick enough to be transferred to the prison infirmary. After working hours there is an hour of exercise during which the prisoners walk in a circle three or five abreast under the constant supervision of the guards.
- 7. Prison rations are poor but sufficient to sustain life. In the morning the prisoners receive black coffee and at seven o'clock begin work. At noon dinner is dished out in the corridors into plates. Usually it consists of soup, beans or peas, potatoes or carrots, and, three times weekly, five decagrams of meat generally in the form of goulash. At one o'clock the siren screams again and the prisoners return to their work. At four o'clock work is over and the hour's exercise begins. This walking in the courtyard sometimes lasts only a half-hour. After that, the prisoners enter the cells where supper is dished out, after which comes inspection and lock-up.
- 8. By seven o'clock all prisoners must be in their cells where the commander of the department, together with the guard, counts the prisoners and examines their physical condition, after that, the guard locks the door and the prisoners must remain in their cells until nine o'clock. They may read, talk, or otherwise amuse themselves, providing there is no strife or noise. At nine o'clock a bell rings and all the men must get into their cots and go to sleep. The large light in each room is extinguished but a small one is left burning, so that the cells are illuminated all night and the guard walking the corridor can readily see what is going on in each cell.
- 9. The above is the order of the day and any deviation or disruption is punished by the taking away of such privileges as writing or receiving visitors. Sometimes the punishment is more severe, such as the discontinuance of rations for a day. Visitors are permitted only in very special instances. The family must write to the Commandant of the Institute and if a permit is granted it states on it what day and hour, and for how many minutes the visitor may stay. The commandant approves the request for a visit only if such a privilege was proposed by the manager of the workshop to which the prisoner is assigned.
- 10. Each prisoner, upon arrival at the prison and before he is issued a uniform, is examined by the management, by the Commandant and finally by the Classification Commission. The Commission is headed by the Commandant, consists of the Enlightenment Officer and the Commandant's assistants. The Commission inquires about the prisoner's name, nationality, his sentence, and what Court passed sentence, whether a State or District Court. They also ask him to give a short summary of his crime. This hearing governs the stamp placed upon his commitment papers; either an "O" which means Ostrov Jachymov, or "HUB" which means the coal mines in Handlova. Thus the prisoner learns what will become of him. Technicians, mechanics and tradesmen are usually kept in Leopoldov and put to work in the various shops there.
- 11. Each month a contingent of Leopoldov prisoners, about 150 men, is sent to the Jachymov Uranium mines and the terminal station at Ostrov. Also about 100 to 150 men are sent regularly each month to the Handlova coal mines. Prisoners with lighter sentences are placed in various forced labor camps and quarries, for instance: Skladana Svalka Quarry; Voderacy near Nitra, a State Farm; Sucany, a brick-yard; Pesinok, a brick-yard; Piestany

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Brickyard and sawmill; Zilina, a sawmill and factory; and all over Slovakia where the civilian employees are supplemented or replaced by prison labor. Leopoldov constantly receives a stream of new prisoners from the various jails in Slovakia and the older prisoners are placed in various works according to the classification and direction of the warden of the prison.

12. Imprisonment in Leopoldov produces horror and hopeless desire for freedom. The prisoners on the whole manage to endure it quite well. They are mostly intellectuals who believe that democracy will not surrender them to the claws of the Bolshevik wolf and they console themselves with each tiny scrap of news which comes into the prison, generally via the stoneasons from the vil age. They live only for the hope that the Communist regime will collapse and that they will be freed. They also count on outside intervention. This is the only thing enabling them to carry on. They believe in "democracy" and that their salvation will come when the western powers aid them. A good many of them have worked in the US and therefore don't believe that the US will let the country remain in the grasp of the Communist beast of prey. The prisoners are quite tolerant of one another and assist each other as much as they can. The Warden or Commander of the entire prison is Anton Michalik, 1st Lieutenant, SNB, a former prison guard in Bratislava. He is a firm Communist and a rough individual. He was born in Devinaka Nova Ves and now lives in Leopoldov. The Enlightenment Officer is Augustin Barmann, 1st Sergeant, SNB. A severe person, he follows to the letter the instructions of his commander.

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